SN 7.11 — With Bhāradvāja the Farmer

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Text

Linked Discourses 7.11

2. Lay Followers

With Bhāradvāja the Farmer

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Magadhans in the Southern Hills near the brahmin village of Ekanāḷa.

Now at that time the brahmin Bhāradvāja the Farmer had harnessed around five hundred plows, it being the season for sowing. Then the Buddha robed up in the morning and, taking his bowl and robe, went to where Bhāradvāja the Farmer was working.

Now at that time Bhāradvāja the Farmer was distributing food. Then the Buddha went to where the distribution was taking place and stood to one side.

Bhāradvāja the Farmer saw him standing for alms and said to him, “I plough and sow, ascetic, and then I eat. You too should plough and sow, then you may eat.”

“I too plough and sow, brahmin, and then I eat.”

“I don’t see the worthy Gotama with a yoke or plow or plowshare or goad or oxen, yet he says: ‘I too plough and sow, brahmin, and then I eat.’”

Then Bhāradvāja the Farmer addressed the Buddha in verse:

“You claim to be a farmer,

but I don’t see you farming.

Tell me how you’re a farmer when asked:

how am I to recognize your farming?”

“Faith is my seed, fervor my rain,

and wisdom is my yoke and plough.

Conscience is my draft-pole, mind my strap,

mindfulness my plowshare and goad.

Guarded in body and speech,

I restrict my intake of food.

I use truth as my scythe,

and gentleness is my release.

Energy is my harnessed beast,

transporting me to sanctuary from the yoke.

Without turning back, it goes

to where there is no sorrow.

That's how to do the farming

that has freedom from death as its fruit.

When you finish this farming

you're released from all suffering."

"May the worthy Gotama eat! The worthy one is a farmer. For the worthy Gotama does the farming that has freedom from death as its fruit."

"Food enchanted by a verse isn't fit for me to eat.

That's not the principle of those who see, brahmin.

The Buddhas cast aside things enchanted with verses.

Since there is such a principle, brahmin, that's how they live.

Serve with other food and drink

the consummate one, the great seer,

with defilements ended and remorse stilled.

For he is the field for the seeker of merit."

When he had spoken, the brahmin Bhāradvāja the Farmer said to the Buddha, "Excellent, worthy Gotama … From this day forth, may the worthy Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for life."